



Being Urgently Devoted – Part 2

Recognizing True Spiritual Leaders

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Well, Jesus clearly warned us that if we ever have to play Follow the Leader, you'd better make sure you pick a leader who knows where he's going. Don't pick one that doesn't know where he's going. That won't work out well for you. Another way to put it, as he did much more seriously in Luke Chapter 6 verse 40, he said everybody who's taught by a teacher after a while when he's fully trained he's going to become like his teacher. But that certainly makes us think you'd better be careful about the influences that you have and the people who teach you. And certainly when it comes to church, if you're faithful to do what God says we should do in his Word that we shouldn't forsake assembling together. You think about going to church and being taught you're going to sit under hours and hours of teaching every year at your church. That's going to have an effect on how you think and how you act and the values that you carry.

It's interesting over there in the book of Ephesians as the Holy Spirit gives a name to the leaders, the spiritual leaders in a church, he gives them a compound name with two words that are very important. The second word in the list is the word "teacher" in Greek "Haskalah." It's a word that you associate with spiritual leaders, certainly at a church, because they spend a lot of time like I'm doing right now, teaching, standing up and explaining what God's Word says. But the word in front of it is the word "Pointon," the word "pastor," which is really the word "shepherd," which is an agrarian term for a person out in a field who is leading sheep into green pastures and making sure they're taken care of. So those words go together really well because whoever's teaching is certainly leading because the teaching is going to lead you, and it's going to lead you in directions and lead you away from some things and towards some things and that's certainly the case.

But not only just for, you know, your spiritual leaders who seem more formalized in that sense, but even all the way down to your friends. I mean, think of Proverbs Chapter 13 verse 20 that says, he who "walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools suffers harm." I mean, there's just no way around that as Paul put it all the way in the New Testament, First Corinthians Chapter 15, the problem is that "bad company ruins good morals." You can be doing well, but when you start putting people around you they're going to influence you and they're going to spiritually influence you. So whether you're picking someone to take you through a discipleship program, or joining a small group, or being a part of a sub-congregation, or choosing a church, or even just picking some of your best Christian friends, the kind of people you're choosing to influence you they're going to have a big impact on your life and you better choose wisely.

Well, embedded in the text that we've reached today in Second Corinthians Chapter 11 beginning in verse 5, Paul is going to lay out between verses 5 and 11, at least we can find in this text three tests to think through what it means to choose the people who influence us spiritually, and to choose them wisely. And I want you to look at this text because Paul, as we already know, if you've been with us in this study, is contrasting his leadership and his role



with those who are working really hard to influence the Christians at Corinth. So take your Bibles and let's look at this passage together, Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verses 5 through 11. And he's going to talk about these people who have stepped in to influence these Corinthian Christians. He's later going to call them false apostles, but here, dripping with sarcasm, he calls them in verse 5, super-apostles. So let's look at this text with some commentary and try to make some sense of it. And then we'll go back through it and pick up these three tests, things that we should be looking for whether we're talking about pastors or our best friends.

Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 5. "Indeed," Paul says, "I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles," literally these hyper-apostles, right? Okay, now Jesus has apostles, these sent ones who are more than the sent ones when Jesus is appointing them. He has a bunch of disciples whom he appoints to what he calls the Twelve. So of course you can speak of the apostles in a non-technical sense, and someone can be sent in a lot of different ways in the Bible, even in the book of Acts, people can be sent in a non-technical way. But there are twelve apostles who Jesus keeps talking about, and one of them didn't work out very well, to understate it, to state it mildly. And his name is what? (audience says Judas) Okay. You're awake here, right? Judas. So in Acts Chapter 1, they say well we should replace him because Jesus kept talking about the Twelve, and he made promises in Matthew Chapter 19 that the Twelve would be sitting on the twelve, you know, thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And, you know, later John would reveal at the end of the Bible in the book of Revelation that there would be twelve foundation stones with twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And it seems really important that we have twelve.

So they go about it through something called casting of lots, like rolling dice to figure out who the twelfth should be. I don't think that was sanctioned by God. If you go back to the sermons we preached on this, we just, I mean, they get a name out of all that, but by the middle of the book of Acts, as we studied through it, we have someone who makes much of his ministry as an apostle, and he's the apostle to the Gentiles. And I'm just assuming in God's great plan he has this apostle, the Apostle Paul, who's going to certainly fulfill the role being from the tribe of Benjamin and ruling over one of the twelve tribes of Israel during the Millennial Kingdom, at least in my understanding, that's probably our twelfth apostle, as he says in Second Corinthians Chapter 12, in the next chapter we're going to get to, in verse 12, he is going to be demonstrating with great patience the signs of an apostle, which are the credentials of the other eleven. And he's going to be doing those faithfully there. And I think he is that name that will be written on one of the foundation stones around the walls of the New Jerusalem in the eternal state. So that's my guess. We'll see if I'm right. But that is my educated guess on the idea of Paul being that apostle.

So here come the super-apostles which is a funny thing if you think about Jesus kept talking about the twelve, they come in and say, no, listen to us. And they're putting themselves, even in some illogical way, above the apostles. Which is silly. It makes no sense. But they are that kind of people, filled with hubris and pride and self-aggrandizement and self-promotion. And they're certainly doing a lot to put themselves on a high shelf as it relates to the minds of the Corinthians. And Paul says, you know, "even if I'm unskilled in speaking," which he leans in



and takes hold of their criticism of him, which I'm thinking is a bit of an overstatement in his own mind, because, I mean, I wouldn't mind having him as a guest speaker here, wouldn't you? I mean, it'd be okay. Right? He says, "I'm not so in knowledge," and that's why we'd want him in the pulpit here. Right? Because he clearly is coming with good biblical knowledge. "Indeed, in every way we've made this plain to you in all things."

All you have to do is go back in your mind or if you're note takers, you can put it as a cross-reference in your notes, First Corinthians Chapter 2. He makes it very clear, I think, as an apostle, one of the things he's doing with the authoritative voice of Christ as he speaks of in the book of Galatians, having been in northern Arabia, learning from Christ personally, he gets this revelatory information from Christ. And it says in First Corinthians Chapter 2, there are things that the mind can't conceive and eyes can't see and ears can't hear, but they've been revealed by the Spirit to him, and he's made them known to the Corinthians. He is a conduit as prophets of the Old Testament were, as the apostles were in this age and he's giving revelatory information. This is new information from God. And so we end up with these 27 books of the New Testament, and we have God speaking through the apostles and the prophets, and he's made that plain to them and clearly they know Paul is bringing God's truth.

Now, he wasn't speaking like the sophists of the first century. And they don't have all the rhetoric of the classical school of the Greeks and all the rest. And clearly he's not playing that game and they understand that. And part of that game, by the way, shows up in the next verse, verse 7. I didn't commit a sin, did I by humbling myself so that you might be exalted, right? I was bringing you this biblical and heavenly knowledge that you wouldn't have had otherwise. That's what revelation is, by the way. Information and knowledge that wouldn't otherwise be known had God not revealed it. And I was the conduit of that to you. And was I sinning "by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches," verse 8, "by receiving support from them so as to serve you. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I kept myself from being a burden to you in any way."

Now, this is weird because I told you that up there in Macedonia those churches didn't have the means that they had down in Achaia where Corinth was. Corinth was a very wealthy city on that little isthmus there where you had, you know, east-west maritime trade and north-south, you know, land trade, and you had all of this concentrated there. So you had wealthy people there which was the problem, which is why he didn't want to be paid, because there was this client-patron relationship that everyone wanted which certainly led to the mindset that was attacked back there in First Corinthians. "I follow Paul; another, I follow Apollos; another, I follow Cephas." Everyone wanted this connection of these rich people saying that's my philosopher, or in this case, that's my theologian. And they would be in this paid relationship where the rich people in the church would say I'm buying these people to be my guy. And that's where Paul comes in wisely, and even in other places, because he just doesn't want to be a missionary passing the plate. He gets finances from Christians in other places and he comes without charge. And even in places like Ephesus when there was a need he would even start this tent business, because people were coming to, you know, the



Artemis temple. And he would make tents and make some money to make sure he wasn't passing the plate as he was winning people to Christ.

He clearly believes, First Corinthians Chapter 9 verse 9, that you should pay your pastors and do "not muzzle the ox when it treads out the grain." And even our translators say at the beginning of that Chapter that Paul surrenders his rights. He had the right to be paid, but he's not being paid, particularly so with the Corinthians because of this patron-client relationship that all the sophists and the theologians and the philosophers wanted to have, the super-apostles wanted that. That showed credentials that they were smart and they were teachers and they were real, bona fide, you know, theologians and intellectuals. Paul didn't come in with that. Not only was he not schooled in all the rhetoric of the Greeks, but he also certainly didn't demonstrate that, he didn't touch all the bases of that. Now, he's not even willing to be the client of the wealthy patrons in Corinth. And so they look down their nose at that and he's going, was that a sin that I humbled myself, that I wasn't charging for the gospel? Verse 10, "As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia." That's where they were in the region of Achaia there in modern-day Greece. "Why? Because I don't love you?" No, it's just the opposite. "God knows I do!" Okay.

There's a little history, a little bit of what's going on in this passage. Let's go back through it now and touch on each of these sections and see some things that you ought to be looking for in everything from your best Christian friends all the way through all the spiritual leaders that you choose in your life. Okay, let's start in Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verses 5 and 6, "Indeed, I consider that I'm not the least inferior to these super-apostles." Now, both Paul and the super-apostles, as he sarcastically says, later he's going to call them false apostles, they're all wanting to be an influence in the lives of the Corinthians. "Even if I'm unskilled in speaking, I'm not so in knowledge." So he's contrasting the fact that there may be other people with more pizzazz in their delivery but I'm bringing you knowledge. What kind of knowledge? First Corinthians Chapter 2 knowledge. Clear biblical, revelatory truth which would be codified into the New Testament Bible. So I'm bringing you God's truth. "Indeed, in every way we've made this plain to you in all things." We're giving you God's truth. Okay? Now ratchet forward 2,000 years. We have this now as what we know of as the 27 books of the New Testament, which, of course, they already had the 39 books of the Old Testament. So we have this written Word of God, and he's saying I was all about that.

Regardless of my polished delivery, I was bringing you God's truth. And for that you ought to say, I'll take that over the fancy delivery. That's what I want. God's truth. And that's what you ought to treasure. Number one, you ought to "Treasure Leaders Who Treasure God's Word." If they treasure God's Word, it's going to come out of them. If they're your best friends, your small group leaders, your discipler, or your pastors, or the people who write your books that you read, or the radio guys who you listen to. Whoever is influencing you, you want them to treasure God's Word. You want them to be a Psalm 1 kind of person who meditates on God's Word day and night. Because then when you're with them, or you listen to them or you read what they write, they are going to influence you by bringing you knowledge. What kind of knowledge? God's knowledge. That's going to come out of them. Right? "The kisses of an enemy are deceitful." You may find people who say a lot of things that are very sweet, very



kind, but "faithful are the wounds of a friend." What you want is the truth no matter how it feels.

And speaking of that little, you know, proverb, let's go to Second Timothy Chapter 4, and let's just look at something that could be written today. This is so relevant and so timely to where we live right now in the 21st century in Southern California. Turn with me to Second Timothy Chapter 4. You want people who are all about God's Word, who treasure God's Word, who are ready to say things to you both to encourage and to influence you, even if it's correcting you, who are all about God's Word. That's what you want. Now, Paul here is writing to Timothy and I like this because Timothy is not writing Scripture, right? Timothy is reiterating what Paul has said. Right? Think of Second Timothy 2:2, "things that you've heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." In other words, Paul here is bringing new revelation to everyone he's preaching to. Timothy now is taking what Paul has written and what Paul has said, and now he's reiterating that. The authority for Timothy comes from what the apostles and prophets have said. That's where we live, right? And thankfully it's all written down for us.

So we have the God-breathed words that have come down to us, and we now say, okay, we're delivering that. So that's Timothy's role. That's our role. Which, by the way, everything I say today in this message, just remember this: First Peter Chapter 5 verse 3, First Peter Chapter 5 verse 3, First Peter Chapter 5 verse 3. Remember that. Why? Because everything I'm going to say about spiritual leaders, that verse reminds us that everything that you should look for in a spiritual leader, it should be emulated in your life whether you think you're a leader or not. Everything that God wants to have in your spiritual leaders should be the goal of your life. Because you know what? You're going to be a leader in someone's life. You're going to influence someone. And not only that, it's a good thing for you to do the things that you should be looking for in a spiritual leader's life. So everything I'm going to talk about, I know we're always looking in the direction of making sure you choose wise friends, making sure you choose wise small group leaders, making sure you choose good authors, making sure you choose good, you know, radio preachers, making sure you pick good pastors. All of that's true. But also I want you to do every part of what... you should treasure God's Word. But first and foremost in terms of the direction of this passage you should treasure people who treasure God's Word.

Here's what I want to find in people that I want to draw near to me. I want them to influence me. Verse 1, Second Timothy Chapter 4, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus." Now everything we do is in the presence of God and in the presence of Christ Jesus. They're omniscient, talking about the first person and the second person of the Godhead. They know everything. So why say that? Because he wants that front and center in Timothy's mind. I want to tell you to do something, and I want you to know God's listening in on this. He is a witness to this, and he's in full agreement with what I'm about to tell you. "Who is to judge the living and the dead." He not only is in full agreement with what I'm going to say, he's going to hold you accountable for what I'm going to say. He's in perfect agreement. He's the lawgiver and the judge, both the living and the dead. Well, after you die you're still cognizant and you're still, you know, understanding and sentient and all that. I mean, so what does that



mean? That means the living, those who are given eternal life, and those who are not, who are going to be having that, as we've talked about in the series previous, they're going to have everlasting shame and contempt. So we're talking about Christians and non-Christians.

Christians have one kind of judgment. They're all going to be evaluated, the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment. Everyone's going to meet their maker and going to be evaluated by their maker at one judgment or the other. So Christ is going to judge the living Christians and the non-Christians. "And by his appearing," I'm also charging you by the fact that he's going to show up, Christ is going to show up, "and his kingdom." So Timothy says, now, that's a big prelude for whatever you're going to say to me, Paul, that you want me to think about God's listening, Christ is listening. He's going to judge. He's going to judge non-Christians and Christians, the people you're going to talk to, the people that you are, you're a Christian, Timothy. And he's coming and he's going to have a kingdom. Wow. This must be important. Well, here it comes. Here's the imperative, verse 2, "Preach the word." It's as simple as that. Preach the word. Now this word "preached," the word "Kēryssō," it just means "proclaim it." Lay it out there. Get it out. Preach the word, the logos. This written text, which is written from our perspective, a lot of it was spoken from Timothy's perspective because Paul said things "you've heard from me in the presence of many witnesses." I've been clear. I have written you some things. I've spoken some things for us. Thankfully, it's written for us now. It's called Scripture, "Tagraphē," the Scripture.

So we are supposed to preach the Word. It doesn't matter if you are a preacher in terms of your business card, you, whoever you are, are supposed to lay it out there and you are having people in your life who are supposed to be having the truth of Scripture come out of their lives to influence you. They ought to feel the obligation to tell you scriptural truth. And even when they see things that they think, oh, this isn't this... I don't feel like this is going to be popular. Look at the next line, Second Timothy Chapter 4 verse 2, "Be ready in season and out of season." Be ready in season and out of season. Now, in season, who knows when that might be? Maybe if you lived in the Great Awakening times and everybody was trying to say, oh, just convict me with a Bible verse today. You know, I've never had anybody say that to me when I'm waiting for my car to get washed or whatever. Right? Someone saying convict me with a really hard text of Scripture. Nobody wants that. Not today. Or out of season, which is like, I don't know, 21st-century Orange County, California. That's out of season, right? That's when no one wants you preaching the Word to them. Matter of fact, preaching is a bad word in our vocabulary today. Don't preach to me.

So all I'm telling you is it says the people who you want in your life, the people who you should treasure in your life, are the people, as I said, who are willing to tell you the truth. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." And I say wounds because look at the next three words. It says here, you should "reprove, rebuke, and exhort." Paul's telling Timothy to do that. And I am saying you're going to have people in your life they're going to say, you know what? I just need to say this because I care about you. This is wrong. I'm going to reprove you, rebuke you. You have to stop doing what you're doing, and exhort, you need to do what you're not doing when I tell you to do this, and they're going to do it "with complete patience," they're going to keep doing it. It's going to be consistent. And with, here's the other word, "teaching,"



you have to keep going. It's like, I'm going to spell it out. I'm going to one-line, next line. Go to this, go to that. I'm going to keep laying it out for you. "For a time is coming," verse 3, "when people will not endure sound teaching," right? That's the out-of-season time.

And it's almost as if he's going to say it's going to settle into that time. "But having," this great desire to be patted on the back, "itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions." And the passions of people when it's out of season, right? When you have a dominant spirit of the age which says, I just want you in the name of Christ and religion to tell me what I want to hear. Please tell me things that match my basic desires of life. I'm okay. You're okay. Everything's fine. God wouldn't want to change me. God wouldn't want to, you know, stop me from doing what I want to do. God would want me to love whoever I want to love. Be whoever I want to be. Never put any strictures in my life, never want to, you know, put barriers for my potential. God would want me to do whatever I want to do. That can be done in the name of Christ, and it's being done in the name of Christ all over the world, and certainly all over the Western world, and certainly in America. As a matter of fact, the more you do that the bigger your auditoriums need to be. Matter of fact, you could probably take a sports arena. And you could probably, you know, configure it and turn it into a church and fill it up if you're a decent speaker, as long as you tell people exactly what they want to hear. You just find out what people want to hear. You extract all the things that are not things they want to hear and a lot of people will come and hear that, week after week after week after week.

They "will turn away from listening to the truth." They don't want the truth. They'll leave those places. They'll go to another place. They'll leave those friends and go to other friends. "And wander off into myths." They want to live under the lie. I want to unpack that word in just a second, but I want you to know that sometimes it's the not popular person you need to value as the friend you want in your life. It's the unpopular small group leader who you want to be your small group leader. It's the person who everyone's afraid of who takes people through Partners and the discipleship program that you say I want that person. It's the person that you think, I know they're going to tell me the truth, and that's because they're going to be faithful to the Word. Because they're looking over their shoulder thinking God's listening, Christ, you know, has commissioned me to do this. I know this is the right thing to do. He's going to judge me if I don't. They're afraid NOT to tell you the truth. That's how verse 1 started. And they're going to do it whether it's the season to do it or not to do it. And they're willing to reprove, rebuke and exhort and they're going to patiently do that. I know the time is coming and people won't endure it, but we need to do it now.

That last word, myths, I want to explain what that means by going quickly to Jeremiah Chapter 23. Myths. That word, by the way, is a transliterated word, the Greek word "Mūthos." And that's another, there are a lot of them. I forget how many there are till I run into another one and there's another one. The idea of mūthos, right? Obviously it's not hard for us to understand, it's something that's not true, but I want to show you how that ends up in preaching and spiritual advice and counsel. You know, counseling, biblical counseling. You know why people don't like biblical counseling because it's biblical and if it's biblical, it often makes people think, I don't like it. You rebuked me. You reprovved me. You exhorted me. I



don't like that. I just want you to tell me it's okay and it's my husband's fault. (audience laughing) That's what I want you to tell me, right? Sorry. Or my wife's fault. That may work better. That is what people want. But what we want to do is tell the truth. We want to tell the biblical truth. How does the Bible have a bearing on this?

Okay, Jeremiah 23, let's start in verse 16 this time, Jeremiah Chapter 23 verse 16. "Thus says the Lord (Yahweh) of hosts." Again hears that phrase, Yahweh, that's the proper name of the Triune God, "host" are the armies, that's speaking of the angelic class. So the Lord of hosts, the army, the King of the armies of heaven. "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesied to you." Now that's like saying don't listen to the preachers who preach to you and a lot of people go, Yay! Finally! No, no, no, that's a weird thing to hear from God. Right? God's sending prophets but he's making it clear that not all the prophets are sent by me. And today you just need to know that you don't just want to tell people at work, just go find a church. Just go to any church. You need to remind people they can't just pick any spiritual leader. Don't feel good just because you have some relatives who you're hoping somehow will find Christ and you hear they're going to church, you go, oh good, I'm so glad. No, don't be glad unless you know what kind of spiritual leaders are influencing them. You have to know, because there are some of them that the Lord of hosts says, don't listen to them.

"Don't listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you." Why? Because the kinds of people who teach myths are this kind, "filling you with vain hopes." That's a myth, a hope that everything's going to be fine. It's a hope that you shouldn't have, a vain hope. It's a false hope. "They speak visions," bottom of verse 16, "of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord." In their own minds. And they're really nice people. Have you noticed that? They're nice. They want it to be this way. They really do want you to love whoever you want to love. They want you to have no limitations on whatever you want to be. They want you to be happy. There are a lot of nice people saying a lot of wrong things, and it's in their own heads. Verse 17, "They say continually..." I mean, this is the theme of their preaching. This is the theme of their counsel. This is how they advise their friends. "They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord," if they would have opened it and seen what it says they would know that. But they say, oh, "it'll be well with you," it'll be fine. "And to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster is going to come upon you.'" It's going to be fine. Everything's going to be fine.

And do you know how they get away with that? They take little slivers of the Bible and they make them into big fonts and they say, look, here it is. Now you can inject your own definition into phrases like this. God is love, right? God is merciful. God is kind. God is patient. Now, are those things true? Of course they're true. There's more to the story than that. And we have to define those things biblically. He's also holy. He's also just. He's also the lawgiver and judge. Those are never put on the banners of churches that are trying to fill you with vain hopes, who want to teach myths, things that are not true because they want to say everything's going to be fine.

Jeremiah Chapter 23 verse 18, but "who among them has stood in the counsel of the Lord to see and hear his word?" Now you could have gone and actually seen the scrolls of Moses.



You could have gone and really seen them. You could have heard people read them. "Who has paid attention to his word and listened? Behold, the storm of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked." It's coming, right? The judgment of God. The train has left the station. Verse 20, "The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he's executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly."

Now this is the sixth century. This is when Jeremiah is going to earn his title, the Weeping Prophet, because the armies of Nebuchadnezzar are sharpening their swords. And everyone's going to understand it clearly that when all those prophets are preaching to people saying it's all going to be fine, eventually the armies are going to march through and destroy Solomon's Temple and all the houses and all the villages and all the towns, and they're all going to be destroyed. Only the poorest of the land are going to be left, the best and brightest and the youngest are going to be taken off as prisoners to Babylonia. This is going to be a really, really bad thing. And they're all going to understand; I guess the prophets prophesied wrongly.

Just like in our day, everyone who's preaching in the name of Christ and God, all the best friends who say it's fine, it's all fine, it's all fine. It's a classic Psalm 50 situation when all we do, here's what it says in Psalm 50, "These things you have done, and I," God, "have been silent," for a while, "you thought that I was one like yourself." God is like us. God's values are our values when they're not according to verses 19 through 20 in this passage. Jeremiah 23 verse 21, "I didn't send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel," here's a good definition of what it means to give good counsel to people, "then they would have proclaimed my words to my people."

I know you call them your friends, and I know sometimes you take someone through the Partners program, or disciple them, this is my disciple. I know we say that, there's nothing wrong with saying that if you understand what it means. Or I might say, well, this is my congregation. I mean, okay, but it's not. And they're not your disciple. And I know they're not your friend. I know it's your friend you mean. I know what you mean by that. But that human being there is God's human being, and that congregation is God's congregation. Right? And those people in your small group, they're God's group of people. You need to proclaim God's words to God's people. Then if they are out of step, bottom of verse 22, "they would have turned," if you tell them the truth, "from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds," by God's grace. That's what we want. If you "reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." That's what you need to do.

Now "faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy. " And all I'm saying is I want a friend like that who's willing to say what is true because they're saturated with God's Word, they treasure God's Word. They get up in the morning; they read God's Word. They study God's Word. They memorize God's Word; they meditate on God's Word. And when you bump into them, a little bit of God's Word leaks out. That's what I want, and that's what you want of your best friends, of your small group leaders, of the people who disciple you, of the authors of the books that you read, of the people you listen to on the radio,



and of the pastors that you sit under. That's what you want. That's what you need, and that's who you need to be. First Peter Chapter 5 verse 3. You need to emulate that because the danger of not doing that is great.

According to Second Peter Chapter 3 verses 15 through 18, you can twist the Scriptures, you can fill in the gaps with your own vain hopes and thoughts, and it leads to destruction. And the destruction, I think clearly is Matthew 7:22 through 23. You start to think all the shellac of phony Christianity is real, and then you hear from him on that day, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." So there's a danger of surrounding yourself with people who make you feel good all the time. They throw Bible verses at you very selectively. But they don't tell you the truth.

The passage there, I just want to say one more thing, something I wrote about and often say to the preaching classes that I teach. Verse 22 Jeremiah Chapter 23. Here's the definition I think of what preachers should be doing when it says, "they would have proclaimed my words to my people." Some people, and I've sat in huge conferences where there are 2,000 pastors or at least want-to-be pastors and pastors in the room, and the guy gets up and says, here's what preaching should be. You decide what you want to say. And then here's a method to try and go into the Bible and find verses that say what you want to say, and then you put it in this format, and then you get up in your pulpit and you say it. Now it took everything within me to stay in my seat in the auditorium because here's the passage I'm thinking about, because basically what's being said to thousands of pastors at one time, you use the Bible to preach YOUR message, when in this text it's clear, the Bible is supposed to use us to preach its message. That's how we're supposed to do this or to personalize it, right? I'm supposed to be used by God to preach HIS message. I'm not trying to use God's Word to preach my message.

If I were, by the way, I would never go verse by verse through the Bible. You know that, right? I certainly wouldn't do anything on Giving like I did in that generosity series. I would skip that one altogether. Plenty of passages I would have skipped in the book of Second Corinthians. I mean, I just wouldn't have done it. I would selectively pick things that I'm sure would have made me slalom my way through a lot of passages that brought me grief and brought people grief which brings me even more grief when you happen to communicate to me about the grief that it brought you. I would much rather just have all the Pollyanna passages and everyone would be happy and we'd go to lunch feeling great. We have to preach the word, as Paul said, "the whole counsel of God."

All right, back to our text, Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 7. Paul brings up this topic. He's not getting into this client-patron situation with the Corinthians. He wants to avoid that. I mean, that's underlying, it's not spoken here, but I think in the context of history, that whole philosopher-sophist situation I think it's there and it's just good policy for missionaries. He didn't charge the Corinthians. Now the super-apostles think that makes him weak and less than and it doesn't. But what it does do is it shows a virtue that the Apostle Paul has. It's not a sin to humble yourself, to preach the Word of God free of charge. Although he does say, as I referenced First Corinthians Chapter 9 says, do "not muzzle an ox while it's treading" is a



clear principle of the Old Testament that says, that's why soldiers don't serve at their own expense. That's why farmers, you know, don't go buy their carrots in the marketplace. They eat carrots that come out of their own field. That's why the priest in the Old Testament didn't have to go and raise their own calves to eat meat. They were fed by the sacrificial system. And so you should pay your pastors, so much so that Paul writes to Timothy he says if they're really good at what they do you should pay them double. This is important that we understand the principle.

But the principle here on the mission field for Paul is I'm going to give up that right. Particularly because of the pressure, I think, of the client-patron situation in Corinth in the Greco-Roman world in the first century. So it does prove one thing, though, when it comes to this, and we see it throughout Paul's ministry, that really he does prefer, as he says here, that as he gets to the bottom of all this, I care about you. It doesn't mean I don't like you. It doesn't mean that I love you less, it doesn't mean that I don't love you, it actually means that I do love you. Now, we'll get into that more in a minute which is a big statement, but let's just deal with the money issue for a minute. You should always value people, let's put it this way, leaders in particular who value people over money. Number two, you should always value leaders, best friends, disciplers, small group leaders, sub-congregational leaders, you should always, "Value Leaders Who Value People Over Money." That's a principle you see throughout the Scripture.

Let me put it this way. One of the earliest, maybe even some think late first century, early second century texts outside of the Bible about the Bible, the teaching of the apostles is called the Didache. Have you ever heard of the Didache? Second-century texts called means the teaching of the Twelve, Philip Shaff, one of the famous church historians called it, his subtitle on the work is called The First Church Manual because it's really about a lot of practical information about how the Church should function. A lot of stuff about, you know, do baptisms this way, blah, blah, blah. In the 11th chapter, they versified it like they did the Bible later in time. But in Chapter 11 starting in verse 4 it starts to talk about people who are coming into your town to preach the Bible. It said if they come into your town, it goes several verses into this, recapitulating the idea, they come into town and they say I'll preach to you but here's what it's going to cost. If they want to charge you, they say, yeah, I'll preach to you, a visiting preacher, right? And they say that then say, no, I'm not interested. Matter of fact, you should know they're a false teacher if that's how they lead. That's not going to be the case.

Now, if there's a legitimate, verifiable need for something that they're going to do, right? They have some project or something, that's different. But if they're coming to say I'll preach to you but here's what it's going to cost you. And I can say, and I may have said this before to you, but I've been doing this for four decades and I've tried to bring you some really good preachers. The best I can find, at least, who are willing to come. And I've said, hey, can you squeeze, you know, Compass Bible Church into your schedule? And I can tell you this without exception, or at least that I can think of, maybe some parachurch guy that, you know... But when it comes to preachers and Christian leaders, I can say almost without exception or without exception, because I can't think of one name right now. I asked them to come preach, and I've never had one of them who I have on the phone or through an email say, yeah, I'll



come, but what does it pay? That just doesn't happen. And I praise God for that. I guess that means I'm picking the right guys because they are saying I value the ministry to your people that I don't even know over whatever it's going to pay.

Now, of course I would be in sin if we didn't give them an honorarium. I think that's right. Do "not muzzle the ox while he's treading." That's my prerogative. And sometimes they give it right back. Okay. A lot of times they keep it because there are a lot of expenses involved and surely I want them to keep it, you should. But here's the idea. They don't ask. But try that at your company. Bring in some guru, some nationally known person to speak to your employees and see if he goes, yeah, I can work that into my schedule and never talks about... No way. There are contracts. There have to be so many blue M&Ms in the green room or whatever.

This is different. The world treats this differently because money is always ranking much higher than the service. And when it comes to ministry, it isn't the service, it's the people. Service is a means to get to the people. We want to serve people because we love people. And you have to always see in Scripture that this is a key. We don't get into ministry, First Timothy Chapter 6, because it's all about money. And yet in the early church, they took Paul's, you know, principle seriously and you could do well financially by being a teacher of God's Word, like Paul says to Timothy. And this was starting to happen. People said, oh, I'll get into that because I can make good money. And Paul says some people think godliness is a means to great gain. Sorry, that's not how this works. Right? Contentment is.

Let me put it this way. Turn over to Philippians Chapter 3. I want to embed the principle that I think you need to see in this, because it's a very simple principle that I preach all the time, but I want you to connect it in your mind. To value people over money is something that I hope you see in your best friends and in leaders who you think, yeah, they're influencing me for good spiritually. I think you'll see this in their lives. Let's start in verse 18 of Philippians Chapter 3. Philippians 3:18, "For many, of whom I've often told you and now tell you, even with tears, walk," or live that's his word for live as a lifestyle, "as enemies of the cross."

Now, what's interesting about this passage is that he's talking about people who are leading. These are people who are passing themselves off, much like we see in Second Corinthians Chapter 11 as leaders. There are teachers, there are spiritual influencers. "Their end is destruction." Okay, I guess they're false teachers then. Yes. Why? "Their god," small 'g' this is the thing that's governing their behavior, "is their belly," which is, in other words, a way to say their passions. It's all about what they want, they want to be satisfied with stuff now. "And their glory is in their shame." Things they should be ashamed of but they're proud of them. "With," here's as though we didn't catch it with those two phrases, "with minds set on earthly things."

Okay. Here's what I'm trying to say. He's going to contrast now with good spiritual leaders with this statement, Philippians Chapter 19 verse 20, "but our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." What are we looking forward to? We can't wait for that next life. "Who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." Here's the phrase I was trying to

get to, right? Good spiritual leaders, good spiritual influencers who are your friends should have an eternal perspective. They should always be thinking it's not about the "here and now." It's about the "then and there." Now here's the problem, you can't swear off money. You just can't. There are a lot of vices that become problematic and you can say I'm going to avoid that altogether. I'm going to swear that off. And that's great.

But there are some things that are and can become vices like money. Matthew Chapter 19. Money can become a vice; it can become an idol. Jesus said over and over again, "you can't serve God and mammon," God and money, right? This is a problem. It's "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil," right? First Timothy Chapter 6 verse 10. It's clearly a problematic thing, but we have to engage in it all the time. You need to buy groceries this week. You need to pay your rent or your mortgage. We need to interface with money. But it's dangerous because it can take our loyalty and our attention, so much so that we always say, well, man, if I had more of it I could just satisfy all my passions. I could fill my passions to get my belly of all the wants filled. And so that's the problem that makes my life be all about the now, the "here and now." But Jesus is always saying, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." I want your heart to be "there." I want it to be Colossians Chapter 3, "set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

Now you have to live on the earth for now. So you'd better have some money. You'd better be gainfully employed. You shouldn't be able to eat if you're not gainfully employed. That's what he said to the Thessalonians in Second Thessalonians Chapter 3 verse 10. So we have to traffic in the money thing. But here's the deal. When it comes to things that are going to go across the threshold of this life to the next, like people, that ought to be the priority. Now, the money, let's put it this way. As Luke Chapter 16 verse 9 says, it ought to be the means to things that are eternal. It ought to be the thing that you use in this way to help you with people, to invest in them to get into the next life. Put it this way, I quote Luke Chapter 16 because that's when Jesus tells the story of the unrighteous steward and he says, you know the world, "the sons of this world are much more," savvy and, "shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light." We should be much more savvy with our money.

So then he says this, he says, "make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into eternal dwellings." Who? The friends that you've made. The "them" is the friends that you've made by unrighteous wealth. I know everyone looks at First Timothy Chapter 6 and says when someone misquotes First Timothy Chapter 6 and they say, "the love of money" and you know, you correct them with that because they say money is the root of all evil. No no no no no no no no no no no no. It says, "the LOVE of money."

Next time you do that think of Luke Chapter 16, because Jesus calls it "unrighteous wealth" there. You're not going to correct him are you? I'm just telling you there's something tainted about this in the way that it often gets between you and seeing it as a means and not an end. Money's not the end. It's not the goal. Right? And if you had a big mass of it, great. There's nothing wrong with being rich. It's just that you'd better utilize it as a means for something that is going to be eternal. Because if it's all about the end then that means your treasure is here,



and that means that your focus is here, your heart is here, and you will not be looking beyond where you should be. Because I could quote passage after passage after passage, that you should be worried about the "then and there," not the "here and now," because Christianity is not about the "here and now," it's about the "then and there." So your best friends, your small group leader, your discipler, your pastors, they should be always valuing people over the finances, over their money and see money as a means and not a goal. And again, First Peter 5:3, you should emulate all of that, not just look for it in people around you.

Verses 10 and 11 quickly. Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verses 10 and 11. Now verse 10 is still on the topic, "As the truth of Christ is in me," this boasting, what's the demonstrative pronoun pointing to? The money thing. This boasting of mine, in other words, I'm not taking money from you guys, I'm not falling into that trap, will not be silenced "in the regions of Achaia." Achaia is where Corinth is. I'm not going to do that. "Why? Because I do not love you? God knows!" Now, I've already said valuing people, that's an act of love. So money is just one part of it. But when he just says, "love you," I just want to take that and say, of course that's a bigger topic. And when someone loves someone, you just need to know what this means. Certainly as Paul thinks about loving the Corinthian congregation he is committed to their well-being, which sadly, the super-apostles were really worried about themselves. And Jesus says that's the problem with worldly leadership. They're always thinking about what they can get out of their leadership because they're selfish. Selfish ambitions are about them being served in their leadership when real Christian leadership is about serving people and the platform may grow, but that just means you're serving more people, serving.

Jesus said, I "didn't come to be served, but to serve." He says, you want to know what greatness is, right? You know I'm the greatest one among the 13 of us. He says yet, "I'm among you as one who serves." When you come in with your crusty, dirty little feet, who takes up the basin and the towel? I do. So you need to readjust your idea because the Gentiles think it's about you being on top of the org chart so you don't have to do anything, but really it's the other way around. The greater you are, and the greater we understand someone to be, the more they're willing to serve.

Now, I talk about this, right? Going the extra mile, staying the extra hour, and spending the extra dollar. Point two is about spending the extra dollar because we always put people before the money. Well, let's just deal with the other two, because love is always sacrifice. Going the extra mile and staying the extra hour, that's just two of the peaks of what it means to sacrifice. Number three, let's put it this way, "Commit to Leaders Sacrificially Commit to You," right? You should be looking for people and valuing and treasuring and committing to say I like this, this is what it should be, because I see in them the willingness to commit and they commit sacrificially. They're in it when it's hard, they stay in it, they're committed to it. And like Paul said, they're willing to spend and be expended for your souls. And that's your best friends, that's your Partners, that's your disciplers, your small group leaders. You want to see the tenacity of people who say I will stay the extra hour; I will go the extra mile. Not just I will spend the extra dollar, which is certainly a good thing.

One passage on this has two good examples for us. Turn to First Thessalonians Chapter 2 once you write all that down. I hope that you're naturally drawn to people around you who you know truly love you. And if they love you that means they're not just trying to use you in any way. They really do care. They sacrificially are committed to your good. And Paul shows that in so many ways in all of his letters and here's one that is so good. First Thessalonians Chapter 2. Let's start in verse 6. Clearly he's saying it isn't about me, verse 6, it's not about me, he said, "nor did we seek glory from people." We weren't looking for a bunch of people in bleachers to applaud us. First Thessalonians 2:6, "whether from you or from others." That's not what it was about, "though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ." does that sound like Jesus? Hey, I'm the Son of Man. I'm the important one among the 13, and yet "I'm among you as the one who serves."

So are you catching the idea here that this isn't about me, right? That's not what it's about. As Jesus said, it's not even about me giving so I can get back. He said if you give so you can get back, if you throw a banquet hoping that people will invite you to their banquets, you have this all wrong. This is what sacrificial commitment is all about. It's that you're not expecting anything in return. Paul could have made demands, but I didn't. Instead, here's a great example, a great illustration. "But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children." Do you want a good example? Look at a mom with this innate love that God puts in moms who are able to sacrifice for children, nursing moms. Think about this. You have a little tiny baby that is not going to make a quid pro quo at two in the morning to agree to mop the kitchen if you just feed me now at two in the morning. There are no deals being made. Nothing in return. But I will serve you. I will change your diaper. I will feed you because I'm a loving mother. Why? Because I love you. Verse 8, "being affectionately desirous of you." He's now applying this illustration. "We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God," of course we want to teach you, of course we want to influence you, "but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us." You want leaders, you want influencers, you want friends who are sacrificially committed to you, and you ought to commit to them.

Verse 9, "For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we work night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you." I hope we look like sacrificial moms to you in that regard. "While we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses," verse 10, "and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers." We weren't out to get anything from you, as I'll show you in the small group questions this week, and I hope you go to a small group this week. I talk about Samuel at the end of his ministry. He's like, look, I didn't try to steal your ox. I didn't try to do deals. I was just doing my ministry. I was serving you guys. I wanted to do good for you. That's what you want from spiritual influencers in your life.

Now the example shifts. Here's the other illustration, verse 11. And it does shift. And there should be a difference in your home and there should be a difference today in the family, because the father has a different slant on this. "For you know how, like a father with his children," now these are harder words, verse 12, "we exhorted each of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom



and glory." Now think about that, right? We were not only willing like a mother to serve, serve, serve, give, give, give because we loved you, also like a father who also loves his children deeply, he'd lay down his life for his children. But do you know what he wants? He wants to make sure that you know what time it is when it comes to what you're supposed to be. And if you're off the course, he's going to coach you, charge you, he's going to make sure that he encourages you to get back on the right path. He's going to exhort you if you're in the wrong place because he knows what he's called you to be, right? The God in this case, to apply the illustration, he's called you into his own kingdom and glory.

So he's always going to call you to apply it, verse 13, back to his Word. "We also thank God constantly for this," because you responded to our coaching, "that when you receive the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the Word of God, which is at work in you believers. For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea." You did the right thing even if it cost you, even if you suffered through it. And like a good dad saying you did it, that's the picture of someone who's willing like the Apostle Paul to say at the end of his time, saying goodbye to the Ephesus leaders, he says, I preach "the whole counsel of God" to you guys. I wasn't afraid to tell you what needed to be said. I'd only preach repentance to you he says later. But I was willing to say, I'm pressing you for deeds that are appropriate to repentance. Commit to leaders who are sacrificially committed to you, whether they are leaders in your friend group, whether it's people that you want to influence you, whether it's authors, whatever. You want people who know what it is to sacrifice for your well-being.

John Newton, do you know that name? He pastored a small working-class church that only was about 60 miles north of London. He did that for 15 years. He had quite a sordid background. He was a slave trader, as most of you know, many of you know. And deeply aware of his own past and feeling a sense of unworthiness as most of us should just as sinners. And yet he became one of the most beloved and faithful pastors in English church history. And as they write about him they note that he was relentlessly committed to God's Word and famously indifferent to status and money. That was not what he was after. And certainly he was known for his sacrificial love for his congregation and the people in it. One of them was William Cooper, the famous poet. And as you read about his life he was a depressive and battled seasons of depression and, you know, attempts at suicide and he had just a rough, rough life. And yet he speaks of the friendship he had with his pastor, Pastor John Newton, and speaks of that relationship being the thing that kept him from utter despair and kept him on this planet.

The two of them together put together the only hymnal which is out there, I have a copy of it, and in that only hymnal from that town, that little town, that's where the hymn Amazing Grace was first published, which is now, I mean, that's known all over the place. I mean, non-Christians know that old hymn, even though they don't grasp the meaning of it all. Newton gave Cooper what he got for 15 years, week after week, month after month, what Paul is trying to describe in our passage, something that I hope we all find in all of our spiritual leaders at every level. I hope we can treasure it. I hope we can value it. I hope we can commit to it. As a matter of fact, if you look back at people who you think have really impacted my life



spiritually, I hope you, I mean, there's not a face that comes to your mind that I hope you say if they've done good in my spiritual life I know that they have treasured God's Word. I know that they weren't trying to get my money to aggrandize themselves, and I know they loved me. Those are things that I pray we all find in increasing measure, and I hope, First Peter Chapter 5 verse 3, I hope we emulate that. I hope we become that for others around us. May that be true of us today.

Let's pray. God, thank you for men like John Newton who remind us that it doesn't matter what our past is. We need to start today to be the kind of people we want to have in our lives. We want your Word to saturate our thinking. We want to not get our counsel from the wicked, as it says there in Psalm 1, "sits in the seat of scoffers." We don't want to have the world define our values and thinking. We want the Word of God to be our anchor, the thing that saturates our thoughts. We want to value people far above our money. We want to use money even as best we can to get more souls into the kingdom. We want to show the relative unimportance of money next to the value of a soul. And we certainly want to show our love in sacrificial ways. Going the extra mile, staying the extra hour. So, God, please let us be that and let us also find that. And may you make this church a place where this is just abounding, that people can look in any direction and find it. And I pray you'd be honored by that here as it increases in the months and years to come.

In Jesus' name. Amen.